MONTEREY NEWS

March 2010
VOLUME XL · Number 3

The Town

by Sue Protheroe

Public Works

Director of Operations Maynard Forbes met with State Representative Smitty Pignatelli, regarding the STRAP grant that was turned down. Even though ten million dollars are available, only two million have been awarded. The money was to be for repairing sections of Route 23 before repaving. Forbes wants to explore other avenues for financing. If the town is not able to repair sections, it will have to be part of the larger job.

The Wilson-McLaughlin House Committee signed an agreement with the town that gives them the right to borrow money for a parking lot and driveway for the former Wilson-McLaughlin property; the agreement will expire on August 10. Maynard Forbes estimates that the cost will be about $40,000. However, since no work has been done on the house, the need for a parking lot and driveway was questioned. Appropriation of the money must be done through a special article

Some of the skaters at the Park Commission's community skating party on February 15 formed a train: (from left) Gabriella Makuc, Samantha Twing, Catherine Twing, Lauren Scapin, Donovan Sawyer, Shayna Sawyer, Jaclyn Derwitsch, Marya Makuc, Lilianna Zyszkowski, Danna Sawyer, Nadia Makuc, Grace Makuc, Madeleine Makuc. (Photo by Jon Sylbert)

on the May town meeting warrant or the agreement will expire.

The new community garden will be located on the Wilson-McLaughlin property. And a dog park is also being proposed there. Once the proper requirements are met for the dog park, it can go on the town meeting warrant, which closes March 15.

Maynard Forbes and Shaylan Burkhart, the Tree Warden, have worked out an agreement about delegation of responsibilities, interaction with the Highway Department, and an accounting of work done so far. Thirty-five hundred dollars of the $6,000 Tree Warden's budget has been spent on planting and pruning; under the new agreement, the Tree Warden will take over the responsibility for tree removal. Shaylan is requesting an increase in his 2011 budget, which the Finance Committee says is reasonable, given the new responsibility.

Twenty-four-hour lighting is needed outside Town Hall, especially since we've gotten the emergency phone. Forbes agreed to check on this and to find out why the present lighting is not working properly.

The water control device on Lake Garfield will be closed on February 15 in order for the lake to fill up for the summer.

Forbes reported bad news on the Chevy 4500 truck, which has 15,000 miles on it and is only three years old. The front end is damaged, and parts alone will cost $4,500. Maynard is investigating to see if a case can be made for a "defect" allowance because the truck is so new. It was bought from Richard Jaffe Chevrolet.

The Board passed a motion to get bids for the salt shed, which the Finance Committee had approved. A special article requesting $71,000 for the project will be placed on the town meeting warrant.

The Finance Committee met with the Select Board to discuss the FY2011 town meeting warrant budget requests. One issue of note was the town's policy of replacing highway trucks every seven years; of course if this is changed there will be additional repair costs. It was agreed that town residents should be made aware of the implications of our black (clear) winter roads policy. We spend more money on plowing, sand, and salt than any other southern Berkshire town, and according to Select Board member Jon Sylbert, we spend more on the roads than on the school budget. The voters will have to decide whether to continue having black roads, which, if costs do not change, will lead to loss of our levy limit, and to an eventual tax override.

Building Issues

Building Commissioner Don Torrico met with the Select Board to discuss a nonconforming building problem. The Stencel property on Hupi Road, now up for sale, was denied a variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals in October 2009. Mr. Torrico asked that the Board either remove the violation or ask the owner to remove the entire building or purchase a piece of property so that the setback is no longer an issue. Robert Lazzarini of the Zoning Board said that Stencel could do a land swap of two-tenths of an acre with his abutting neighbor, thus solving the problem. As of February the problem had not been addressed. The Select Board passed a motion endorsing the Zoning Enforcement Officer's taking action against the outstanding violation.

A complaint was received from a home seller about the inspection of his smoke and CO_2 detector. Although an appointment had been made, the Fire Inspector neither came nor called to reschedule. When the inspection was finally done, the homeowner complained that the Fire Inspector was rude and unhelpful regarding work that had to be done to complete the inspection. Don Torrico was asked to assist the home seller and went to the home

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to explain what work would be necessary to conform to the fire code.

The possibility of appointing an alternate Fire Inspector was discussed. The person would have to be a member of the Fire Department. Fire Chief Ray Tryon was asked to attend a Select Board meeting to discuss this.

The 2010–2011 building department budget request is for level funding.

A camper in a tent with a wood stove behind Bally Gally was reported. While this is not illegal, Police Chief Gareth Backhaus requested Don Torrico to make a safety check and to inform the owners of the property of his safety concerns and the necessary permits.

Police Report

After an interview with Michael Johnson, the Board discussed applicants for the position of full-time police officer and voted to offer Michael Johnson the position for a year, with a six-month probationary period. Johnson has been working on a part-time basis in the town of Buckland, Massachusetts. He started work immediately at the beginning of February, and has secured an apartment in Monterey.

The Police Department responded to the following calls:

- Disabled school bus and box truck.
- Motorist who passed stopped school bus with flashing red light was apprehended and fined $250.
- Various abandoned 911 calls, including one that was "just testing."
- Car lockouts at transfer station and on Main Road.
- CO_2 alarm, Main Road.
- Gould Farm resident walked to Great Barrington.
- Man seen casing house, not located

Power Outage Concerns

Tom Smith from National Grid met with the Select Board on February 22 to discuss the response time for power outages. Police Chief Backhaus said that when National Grid was local, response was faster than it is now, when things are run out of Westborough. He also pointed out that even land telephone lines do not work in a storm emergency, because of overloaded circuits, leaving many Monterey residents with no phone service at all during a power outage. Mr. Smith said Monterey really should be considering a local shelter so that affected residents could have power and heat.

An all-too-familiar scene: hats off to the highway crew. (Photo by Glynis Oliver)

Broadband

Tim O'Donnell from Infinity Engineering attended the Select Board meeting of February 22nd. He is working on a private plan to locate cell towers to provide the Monterey area with broadband and is considering some private land as a possible location for the three towers needed to give Monterey complete coverage. He agreed with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute that the town should be working on changing its bylaws so that all the neighboring towns would have the same laws, making acquiring broadband easier. Boilerplate language for these bylaws is available from the local broadband initiative.

Cultural Events

The Cultural Council has scheduled a Township Day on June 19, which will celebrate the uniting of Tyringham and Monterey.

Joe Baker was asked to organize a "Strawberry Hootenanny" at the Meetinghouse on Saturday, May 29, in the evening. There will be a free concert, >

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with strawberry shortcakes afterwards. Sounds like fun!

This and That

There will be a Rabies Clinic for dogs and cats on Saturday, March 6, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Monterey Fire Station. Dog licenses expire on March 31. New licenses will be available starting the day of the clinic. Please be sure your dog's rabies certificate is current. You can call the Town Clerk's office, 528-1443, x113, or 528-5175, for more information.

Barbara Palmer, Executive Director of the Bidwell House, came in to introduce herself to the Select Board. She said the Cultural Council will host a Community Day. The Board asked that she put in writing her request for a directional sign on Tyringham Road. After receiving the request at a later meeting, the Select Board agreed to advise her that she needed approval from the Planning Board and the Building Commissioner. She passed out Bidwell House brochures to the Board and thanked them for their time. The Museum will be opening on Memorial Day.

Kenn Basler, owner of the Monterey General Store, had his application for a liquor license approved by the Select Board on February 8. Kenn was also appointed to fill a vacancy on the Monterey Library Board.

Nick Garrold from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association met with the Select Board to discuss the town's insurance coverage. He said that the average rate increase for property/casualty, workers' comp, and medical, was 9.7 percent, with Monterey's projected increase for next year at 9.1 percent. The Board agreed to discuss the matter further with him to see if any discounts are available.

Dan Moriarty of the Lake Buel Watershed Association came in to request that $7,500 be placed on the town meeting warrant to continue the monitoring of the outlet at Lake Buel. The Watershed Association is continuing to evaluate a control device, assisted by the engineering study they completed last year with the $20,000 provided them by the towns of Monterey and New Marlborough. The Select Board approved his request.

2010 Census Questionnaire

Help preserve Western Massachusetts's Congressional representation and federal funding. Do your part by responding to the 2010 Census questionnaire. Beginning on March 1, Census workers will go door to door delivering official forms to every home in your town; all forms will arrive before Census Day on April 1. When you receive your form, be sure to fill it out and return it right away! Remember, we can't move forward until you mail it back. For questions, please contact the local Census Office in Pittsfield at 413-553-3201.

Rabies Clinic March 6

A rabies clinic for dogs and cats will be held on Saturday, March 6, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Monterey Fire Station.

Reminder: Dog licenses expire on March 31. New licenses will be available starting the day of the clinic. Please be sure your dog's rabies certificate is current. If you have any questions, please call the Town Clerk's office at 528-1443 x113 or 528-5175.

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Bidwell House 20th Anniversary Summer Events

The Bidwell House has been a part of Monterey longer than most places, since 1750, to be exact. Beginning as the residence of the first settled minister of Tyringham/Monterey, it was home to the Bidwell family for about a century, then a farm, an art school, and a summer home. It became a museum of Berkshire colonial history in 1990, twenty years ago this coming summer. To celebrate this milestone, the museum is planning special events all season and inviting all Monterey residents and friends to join in the celebration.

The museum will open on Memorial Day weekend with a blessing of the house and a dedication of four beautiful granite benches placed in the grounds and gardens in memory of founding board member Jack Jefferson.

On Saturday, July 3, the Bidwell House Museum invites all residents of Monterey and Tyringham and their friends to Township No. 1 Day, a community open house celebration. There will be fun and exciting goings-on for all ages: music, antiques appraisals, planting and gardening for kids, tours, a talk on the early settlement of Tyringham/Monterey, popcorn, and more. Thanks to very generous donations from the Monterey Cultural Council and the Tyringham Cultural Council, all residents are invited to Township No.1 Day free of charge.

Save the date and invite friends for a fun Fourth of July holiday weekend event. Do you play music? We'd love to have you play that day. Please call us at 413-528-6888 or email bidwellhouse@gmail.com.

On Saturday, August 7, the place to be will be the Bidwell House summer garden party. We are planning a beautiful and romantic afternoon of music, food, drink, silent auction, and the company of many friends at spectacular Fiddlehead, the historic Monterey house and former summer residence of Eugene Ormandy. Please plan to join us for this fundraiser to benefit the museum.

Lots of interesting talks, walks, and workshops are planned as well: Professor John Demos will give four talks on "The Lost World of Early America," focusing on the daily life of early residents. Have you always wanted to know how a stone wall is built? We are planning a hands-on workshop on just that. Yale professor Rebecca Tannenbaum will visit to talk on "Midwifery and Early American Medicine"; and Cynthia Hoogs will present her new research on local gravestones in a walking tour of the Monterey cemeteries. These are just some of the highlights of our full and exciting summer program. Details will be in future issues of the *Monterey News*.

Of course, we once again hope to welcome all Montereyans to our Columbus Day weekend Pumpkin Fest too. I look forward to seeing you this summer!

Won't you join us? Your local history museum would love to have you as a member. Memberships are just $35 for an individual, $75 for a family. Members visit the museum for free, get discounts at events, and receive our informative newsletter and invitations to all parties. Most importantly, your membership helps keep the museum going strong. Visit our website: www.bidwellhousemuseum.org.

— Barbara Palmer, Executive Director

Otis Cultural Council Call for Artists!

The Otis Cultural Council invites artists and craftspeople for the third annual Otis Arts Festival, Saturday, July 24, at Farmington River Elementary School, Otis. The entry fee is $15. Applications are available online at www.townofotisma.com/culturalcouncil or at the Otis Town Hall. For information, email Otis-cc@hotmail.com.

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Meeting on Proposed Monterey Dog Park March 6

An organizational meeting for the committee to establish a Monterey Dog Park will be held in the Monterey Meetinghouse basement on Saturday, March 6, at 11:00 a.m. Over fifty people signed a petition last month at the Monterey General Store asking the Select Board to establish a safe enclosed area for dogs on available land at the Wilson-McLaughlin House on New Marlborough Road, near Route 23 (Main Road). The proponents of the project, Charlie Ferris and Dennis Downing, believe that a dog park would offer a great place for Monterey residents to socialize with their two-legged and four-legged neighbors. They believe that a fenced area for the safe exercise of dogs would provide an excellent addition to town facilities, and provide a place where pet owners could allow dogs to run free without worrying about their pets getting into traffic or getting lost.

The Wilson-McLaughlin House Committee has indicated they would be receptive to a dog park, which would be consistent with the municipal purposes for which the property is being held. The proposed location would not conflict with plans for a Community Garden now underway.

Coffee will be available at the meeting. For further information please contact Charlie Ferris at 528-8900 (office) or 528-0732 (home), or Dennis Downing 528-5040 (office) or 528-3381(home), or send them an email at charles.ferris@verizon.net or dennis.downing@verizon.net.

Youth Writing Group Forming

We are pleased to announce the first meeting of the as-yet-unnamed youth writing group. This group is for area middle and high school students who enjoy writing and would like to meet with other like-minded youth. The group will meet for two hours once a month to write, talk about writing, and meet with professional writers. There will be writing from prompts, free writing time, and a chance to read and discuss work that is coming out of the group. As this is a new venture, we expect that it will evolve and develop as time progresses. At the end of the first year we hope to publish, in some form, work by participants.

The group will be run by Franny Huberman, a Monterey resident who has been in charge of the Monterey Library Youth Reading Group for the last six years. It is supported by the Monterey Cultural Council with additional funding from the Sandisfield, Otis, and Tyringham Councils.

The first meeting will be on Friday, March 26, at 7 pm in the basement of the Monterey Meetinghouse, corner of Main Road (Route 23)and Tyringham Road in the center of Monterey. The meeting schedule through June will be on April 30, May 21, and June 25. The group will resume meeting in September. There is no charge for participants but we would appreciate registration so we have an idea of how many people to expect. For registration or additional information please contact Franny Huberman 413-528-5414.

Democrats Caucus March 9

All registered Democrats in Monterey are welcome and encouraged to attend a caucus on Tuesday, March 9, at 5 p.m. in the Monterey Meetinghouse basement. The purpose of this caucus will be to select and endorse candidates to run for town offices. Candidates will be chosen for Board of Appeals, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Cemetery Committee, Constable, Finance Committee, Library Trustees, Park Committee, Planning Board, Select Board, Tax Collector, Treasurer, and Tree Warden.

We are fortunate to have many incumbents who are willing to run for another term. However, particular attention needs to be paid to the Cemetery Committee, Board of Assessors, Library Trustees, Park Commission, and Planning Board, where resignations have occurred or incumbents are not seeking to run again.

The committee's goal will be to endorse the strongest possible candidates to fill the positions that will be on the May 1 ballot. To achieve this goal, it will be essential to have the broadest participation possible by Democrats in choosing those who will administer the town. Please contact me, 644-0102 or casarose@mindspring.com, if you have any interest in serving our town.

— Steve Rose, Chair

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Wildlife Report—Bobcats!

Shaylan Burkhart

Cats, dogs, and birds this past month, lots to see and appreciate. Lynne Leavitt, who lives beside Lake Garfield, saw two red foxes at dusk, crossing the lake on the ice. Generally solitary hunters, these two may have been paired as mating season approached.

Mike and Maureen Banner have seen a chipmunk up and active, late in January. This is unusual, as chipmunks generally spend the winter dormant underground, waking now and then just long enough to snack on stored seeds, then sleep again. Steve Rose saw two red squirrels chasing each other on a split rail fence.

Will Marsh reports that when he was putting together this issue of the *News* on a recent evening he heard a mad scratching and scrambling outside a window; a raccoon was trying to scale the window frame to get at the suet feeder (didn't make it).

In the birds department we have a huge female hairy woodpecker at Ruth Green's bird feeder near Mt. Hunger Road, a couple of male of bluebirds at Gould Farm spotted by Steve Snyder, and a profusion of robins on Diane's Trail, where George Emmons saw them on February 14, Valentine's Day. Susan Protheroe saw a big flock of bluebirds along the Housatonic, and Steve Snyder heard the metallic "tang … tang … tang …" of a saw-whet owl from out on the ice on Lake Garfield (Steve on the ice, not the owl).

Sue Protheroe also reports a cardinal singing near her place by Lake Buel and a big flock of geese flying over, headed for a cornfield.

Steve S. has heard a flicker, "unmistakable," and has seen a great trampling of coyote tracks. He followed a single track and was led to the site of some social doings. Unlike foxes, but like us, coyotes enjoy company.

I have saved the most dramatic sightings for last: on February 6, Storrs and Shirley Olds saw three bobcats all at once, at their place on Blue Hill Road, around 7:00 a.m. And also on February 6, Shaylan Burkhart saw a bobcat walking on Fairview Road, which then lay down for a while by a shed on his neighbor's land (photo above) before ambling off. This is also the month I received photos in the mail of other bobcat sightings in the area: one right on Buckingham Way in Monterey and again three at once, over in Richmond (in a parking lot!) Thanks to the folks who directed those photos my way.

For more on bobcats, see "Bobcats in Town," p. 16.

Call, mail, or email me with your wildlife sightings. Many thanks.

— Bonner McAllester, PO Box 332;
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Alarm Systems & Knox Boxes

Many of the calls the Monterey Fire Company responds to are false alarms caused by malfunctions in alarm systems. In 2009 we responded to 15 alarm activation calls and 13 of them were false alarms. The reasons for false alarms are many, but oftentimes they occur as a result of preventable reasons like improper cleaning and maintenance of systems. Of course there are other unpreventable reasons for false alarms—like burnt toast or faulty sensors, but just as it is important to have an alarm system in place at your residence it is also important to maintain the alarm system to keep it in proper working order.

We at the Monterey Fire Department would like to take this time to remind you of what you can do to keep your alarm system in tip-top shape. If your home safety system includes simple smoke and carbon monoxide detectors bought at the hardware store, it is recommended you clean all devices using a vacuum cleaner to remove dust and cobwebs twice per year. At this time you should also change the batteries and test the alarm according to the manufacturer's instructions. Many carbon monoxide detectors also require a change in sensor every two years. State law requires that all homes have both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. If you have a more sophisticated professionally installed home safety system you should follow the maintenance and cleaning instructions recommended by your alarm company. If all systems in Monterey were properly maintained, we estimate that we could reduce our false alarm rate by at least half, saving Monterey citizens valuable tax dollars.

If you have an alarm system that independently alerts the Fire Department, it is also helpful if you have something called a Knox box. A Knox box is a small box installed near your front door that holds a key to your house so that the fire department can gain nondestructive emergency access to your residence when an alarm sounds and you are not home. If we are called by an alarm company we are legally required to enter your house to fully assess the situation, and we would much rather not have to cause any damage to gain entry. If you are interested in installing a Knox box please call the Fire Department at 413-528-3136 and we can facilitate the process.

The members of the Monterey Fire Department feel honored to serve a town of supportive and receptive citizens, and we thank you in advance for doing your part to keep our town safe. If you have further questions or concerns about fire safety or alarm systems please feel free to contact us at the number listed above.

— Shawn Tryon, Captain,
Monterey Fire Company

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Community Potluck Features Local Young Musicians

An enthusiastic and attentive crowd at the February Community Potluck applauded the initiatives of Gwendolyn VanSant, the executive director of BRIDGE, Berkshire Resources for the Integration of Diverse Groups and Education. She explained how the organization she cofounded provides cultural competency training and advocacy in Berkshire County as well as the new Youth Cultural Ambassador Training. She can be reached at 413-274-1001 or gwendolyn@multiculturalbridge.org.

For the March Potluck Dinner, we have a treat: two members of the local musical trio the Forget-Me-Nots, Monterey's own Gabriella Makuc, 15, on piano, and Hannah Cohen, 12, of Lee, on violin. They will be playing both duets and solos, including works of Mozart, Elgar, and possibly some Irish music for St. Patrick's Day. The trio was formed last summer and has played at various Berkshire venues with acclaim. They are students at Berkshire Music School.

The March Monterey Community Potluck Dinner will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse on March 17 at 6 p.m. Please bring a dish to share and a place setting and silverware for yourself. Everyone is welcome.

—Barbara Dahlman & Kyle Pierce

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Gould Farm Presents Frank La Frazia at Mahaiwe

Gould Farm is proud to present Frank La Frazia's one-man show *Living with It*, chronicling La Frazia's personal experiences as a teenager living with his mother, who suffered from bipolar disorder. The event will take place at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington on Saturday, March 13, at 7:30 p.m. All proceeds from the performance will benefit Gould Farm and its programs. The performance will conclude with a thirty-minute panel discussion and Question & Answer with Gould Farm representatives and Frank La Frazia.

In his one-hour theater piece, Mr. La Frazia revisits his life between the ages of 13 and 18, during which he was his mother's caregiver, negotiating an obstacle course of hospital admissions, medical problems, and his own coming of age. He had only limited contact with his father and a sister who was in another city, and his mother suffered not only with bipolar disorder but also with what would eventually become life-ending diabetes. Now La Frazia's work centers on the effect his dramatic monologue can have on teenagers and families facing the mental health crisis of a family member. In the tradition of Spalding Grey, John Leguizamo, and Eric Bogosian, this poignant and humorous piece features Mr. La Frazia portraying several characters, with narration throughout. La Frazia currently works with at-risk youth through the national-award-winning Playwright Mentoring Project at Barrington Stage Company, located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in which young people use theater and acting to address a variety of issues from drug use to sexuality to school problems.

Free Film Friday, March 12

The next documentary film for community discussion will be shown in the Meetinghouse basement on Friday, March 12, at 7:00 p.m. We will see the riveting *Black Gold*—it's not about oil, but something nearly as precious: coffee, the second-most actively traded commodity on the world market, oil being number one. The coffee market is controlled worldwide by just four multinational corporations.

The film follows Tadesse Mesketa, a heroic man devoting his life to organizing coffee growers' cooperative unions in southern Ethiopia. This famine-stricken area raises coffee for Starbucks. Through the co-ops, the growers are linked directly to the roasters, removing six levels of middlemen and making a much better deal for the farmers. In these families the children typically go hungry and can't attend school, while we in the wealthy countries enjoy our specialty coffee drinks, sometimes at $2 or $3 per cup. See the people growing the coffee shake their heads when they hear about this. Some of them make 50 cents a day. There are no subsidies for these farmers.

The film is full of startling news that links us with Ethiopian families, through our daily cup of joe. As we take responsibility for what we consume, we can make connections that are good for everyone, following the inspiration of Tadesse Mesketa the cooperatives organizer.

The film is 78 minutes long. For more nformation, call Bonner McAllester, 528-9385.

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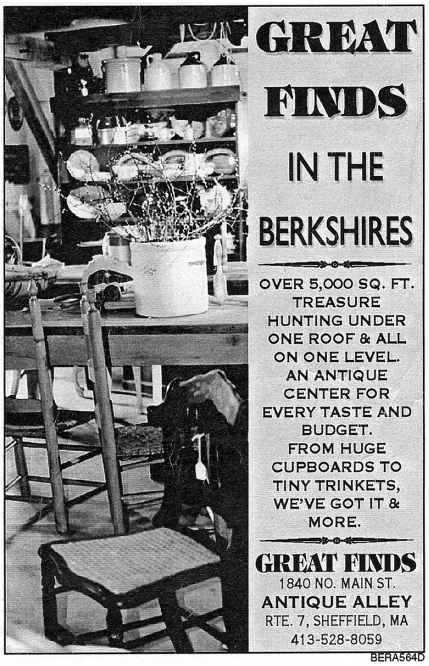
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Roberts Woods Farm Wins Top Farm Bureau Honors

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) recently honored forty horse farms and stables with the designation of "2010 Horse Farm of Distinction," and Roberts Woods Farm of Monterey was one of the select group that earned the award.

Roberts Woods is a not-for-profit Icelandic horse farm owned by Marc and Kathryn Roberts located on Art School Road. The stables horses are used for lessons, for Beartown State Forest excursions, and most proudly for the farm's Therapeutic Riding Program. This program is supported by the generous support of many members of the community, in the form of donations and volunteer work. There are opportunities for side walkers, groomers, computer experts, and fundraisers. (Call the Volunteer Coordinator at 644-9235 for more information.)

In announcing the 2010 honorees, MFBF President Alex Dowse of Sherborn called the forty horse farms selected "the cream of the crop" and added, "These farms present to the public a safe and professional image. They truly showcase the horse industry in Massachusetts for the public."

The 6,500-member Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation represents farmers involved in all facets of agriculture. The "Horse Farm of Distinction" program was begun in 1990 to recognize and present to the public those horse farms and stables that set high standards and achieve a level of excellence in overall horse health, farm management, and compliance with public safely. Not all horse farms that apply receive this prestigious designation.

Judging for new applicants was conducted at each farm or stable by teams of horse-industry professionals along with representatives of the Farm Bureau's Equine Advisory Committee. Staff members from the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources, Farm Family Insurance Company, and Farm Bureau affiliates served on each team. Repeat farms like Roberts Woods were judged by a single judge.

Beth Timlege and Esther Heffernan are in their second year of the Therapeutic Riding Program at Roberts Woods Farm and plan to offer a special young riders class weekly starting in the spring, featuring all aspects of horse care and equitation. They will also lead walking trail rides highlighting the history and natural resources of Monterey.

— Esther Heffernan

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Monterey Library Notes

The adult book discussion group will be meeting on Monday evening, March 29, at 7:30 and discussing *The Lacuna* by Barbara Kingsolver. This group gets so busy discussing that we've had to kick them out of the library at closing time! Feel free to join up with this book or the next—see the schedule by going to the Town of Monterey website (www.montereyma.gov) and clicking Town Government and Departments, then on Monterey Library.

You can also find out what museum passes we have, information about Moxie the Reading Dog, and links to the CW-MARS site to find out what books we have here in Monterey and throughout the system. Check out the website for special activities.

Finally—thanks to the Friends of the Monterey Library, our fantastic book sale is happening whenever the library is open. Special thanks to Colleen Johnson for taking time to sort through the books and set out a great selection for your perusal whenever the library is open! You'll be surprised what you find there for two dollars and under—kids as well as adults, and all proceeds support library programs. Check it out!

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

Lawmakers Team Up To Curb Robocalls

Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli (D-Lenox) and Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington), along with forty-three cosponsors, have filed legislation to curb the widespread use of political "robocalls." The bill would give consumers the option of registering for a Do Not Call List, or if they still wanted to receive this type of call, there would be strict limitations on the call.

"I am pleased that we were able to draft such a comprehensive piece of legislation that will go a long way in restricting these obnoxious phone calls. With another campaign cycle approaching and the subsequent onslaught of robocalls, it is time we did something to protect people's privacy," said Pignatelli. "I am heartened by the widespread bipartisan support we've gotten for this bill and I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to see this bill passed."

"The overuse of automated political robocalls in the recent special election for U.S. Senator was intrusive and annoying to many thousands of citizens throughout the Commonwealth," said Representative Stephen Kulik. "This legislation gives people a choice as to whether or not they wish to receive any type of automated recorded calls at all, and also puts consumer-friendly requirements on those who make them. I am hopeful that the public backlash against robocalls will help to move this bill through the legislature, and allow people to exercise their right to privacy as they presently can under the Do Not Call List for commercial telemarketing calls."

People who do not wish to receive further phone calls can register their phone numbers with the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation. This is similar to the current system in place that protects people from robo telemarketing calls. People who do not register may still receive robocalls, but strict limitations will be placed on them. Some of these provisions are: the call must be preceded by a live operator who must state on whose behalf they are calling, the purpose of the message, and how long the message will be. These calls will be prohibited between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. local time of the recipient's location. Several entities will be exempt from these provisions, including messages from school districts to students, parents or employees; messages to subscribers with whom the caller has maintained or had a business relationship; messages advising employees of work schedules; messages on behalf of correctional facilities advising victims, and messages on behalf of municipal governments and state agencies.

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It's Never Too Late to Dance!

It seems there's no end to the list of benefits seniors can derive from dancing: increased stamina and flexibility; improved circulation; lower blood pressure; better posture, coordination, and balance; increased strength and muscle mass; reduced arthritis pain, anxiety and depression; a sharper mind; positive self-esteem; and a positive outlook on life.

Luckily for Berkshire seniors, Berkshire Pulse offers a gentle dance class for mature adults. "The Dancer Within," as the class is called, uses breath and flow to help seniors find or regain the joy of movement. Led by Andrea Borak, an experienced instructor who has taught at Elderhostel in the Berkshires, the class meets Mondays from 10 to 11:15 a.m. in the Berkshire Pulse studios on Park Street in Housatonic. The cost is $10 per class.

Bettina Montano, Executive Director of the center, says that the center is dedicated to diverse and accessible programming for people of all ages. Both "The Dancer Within" class and the Scottish Country dance class have participants ranging in ages 40–85.

For more information, call 413-274-6624 or visit www.berkshirepulse.com.

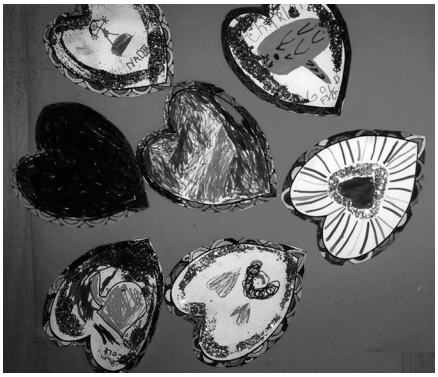
Sandisfield Commemorative Book Planned

A committee is forming in the town of Sandisfield to guide development of a commemorative book that will honor all those who have helped shape this largely rural community from its founding in 1762 until today. Slated for completion in 2012, the town's 250th anniversary, this comprehensive history will cover the principal institutions, historical personalities, and key events that influenced everyday life through the years and created the Sandisfield we know today.

Bernard A. Drew, a highly respected and well-known local historian, will edit this book, provisionally entitled "Sandisfield Revisited: 1762–2012." The book is intended to be the definitive historical reference for Sandisfield, preserving the heritage for future generations and fostering pride among old and new residents.

The committee is seeking material for the book, including histories of Sandisfield institutions, businesses, and civic groups, as well as sketches about the everyday life of Sandisfield's "old-timers," newcomers, and colorful personalities. "Then and now" chapters will feature older homes, farms, and distinct sections of town. Important traditions such as the roles of farming, religious communities, immigration, news events, and town government will also be featured. Residents and others are requested to submit old photos of houses and people and recollections of bygone days.

If you would like to contribute photographs or family history, or are interested in being on the Commerative Book Committee, contact Ron Bernard at 413-269-0012, Ronbernard@aol.com, or Liana Toscanini, 413-441-9542, liana@communityaccesstothearts.org.



The Monterey School students colored these hearts and sent them to Haiti as part of the "Hearts to Haiti" program. The children were excited about encouraging school children in Haiti by sending these cheerful greetings filled with love.

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Return to Sanibel

Waves are lapping against the shore, rhythmic and soothing, as the sun sets over the horizon. Stunning colors radiate through the sky, changing from yellowish orange to deep red in a matter of minutes before it is clear that night has fallen. The wind rustles palm trees as record lows descend over Florida and Sanibel Island. After nine years, I've returned to the island of my youth, where I used to vacation every year. For the first time since eighth grade, I am joining my mom on her two-week vacation to the island. As we were driving across the causeway from Fort Myers earlier that day, the promise of island adventures filled me with a childlike glee. The boardwalk to the water from our unit at Signal Inn looked much the same, despite some missing tress from a hurricane a few years ago. It does not take long for me to assume the famous "Sanibel Stoop" as I search for tiny, yet beautiful shells buried in the sand.

After sunset, we head to dinner at Matzaluna, my favorite childhood restaurant. Only this time we sit at the bar and order a drink while we wait for our table. The same pictures hang on the wall; my favorite is of high-beam construction workers eating lunch above the New York skyline back when the Twin Towers were built. It still makes me dizzy. Our waiter writes his name on our paper tablecloth upside down (so we can easily read it), just like in the old days, and I order their signature pizza. The heavenly tiramisu is just as I remember; in fact, my mother has been bringing a piece home for me each year, but I have not eaten it at the actual restaurant in almost a decade. I have found no place in any country thus far where it is quite so good.

I arise early even on vacation, eager for a brisk morning walk on the beach to welcome in the new day, although I sleep later these days than I did as a kid. Coffee is also new to my routine, as is the digital camera charging and the blackberry message checking. (All my past pictures of Sanibel are the product of 8mm film.) The library looks much the same, but it has a new addition; thankfully the incredible shell display in the front windows remains for us to admire. The library remains, as in the past, a "favorite spot," but now my bag contains historical fictions and Danielle Steele books instead of children's series. Our trip to Bailey's supermarket includes a different set of snacks, and less of them, and a mocha latte. We return to sit on the porch facing the ocean, with blankets because it is chilly and our books, hats, and sunglasses. Eventually, the sun warms us; I change from a sweatshirt to a tee-shirt, and from long pants to shorts. I power through page after page; that much is still the same.

We try a new restaurant; it's good, not amazing, but a new adventure just the same. I still prefer the familiarity of Matzaluna. We visit the hot tub later that night, a true blast from the past. After putting on our suits, we head down the stairs and over to the pool area, turn on the jets, and climb in. I manage to dunk into the colder pool once, before I scramble back to the warmth of the hot tub; I remember that as a kid jumping in the pool did not faze me a bit. Apparently, some things change, and I am keenly aware of it. Sanibel is all so familiar, as are the things we do, and I am not seeing much for the first time, yet it seems that so much is different. It boils down to perspective. It is new for me in my adult perspective, and yet the previous experiences were a defining part of my childhood. That is the link between the child I was and the person am now.

I am reliving experiences, but as a very different person than I was then; am I in the past, or the present? Or both? I feel a little as though I am going back in time, but living both realities simultaneously. Eventually as the hours pass, I decide to simply go with the flow and cherish the new and old memories.

On our last day, we go to the lighthouse beach for some additional shelling, and we drive very slowly through the Ding Darling Wildlife Sanctuary just before sunset, stopping frequently. The names of the birds come back to me, just as the names of the shells appeared on the tip of my tongue that first day. It is frightening what the mind remembers. The wood storks, roseate spoonbills, herons, pelicans, and hundreds of other types of birds make their home here, and we gawk in awe. It is a special place indeed.

Now I sit here writing this on the couch while I should be packing; we're about to eat some nachos, homemade style, and then I need to sleep because I have a seven am flight back to DC. This trip down memory lane is reassuring. My childhood memories and instincts for the island remain as vibrant as I had hoped. Some things it seems are still destined to remain the same.

— Tarsi Dunlop

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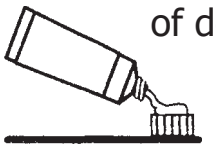

528-6520

Route 23 Monterey

A Vietnam Veteran Remembers

2. April 1967, Ten Miles Southwest of Phu Bai, Vietnam

We couldn't believe our ears. We three radio operators sitting on the ground near the officers, ready to send or receive orders, had just heard the captain say he wanted a Congressional Medal of Honor! We were scared because those medals were usually the result of the worst combat. The man was ambitious, rising from the enlisted ranks, and close to a promotion to major. We were afraid that he would take greater risks with our lives because of his ambitions.

Lima Company had been searching for a week for a trail leading into the mountains. Intelligence said it was there to be found and it would lead to a POW camp. The three platoons searched the area thoroughly, using machetes to cut through elephant grass and vines. At midday, three Intelligence marines, wearing slouch hats not helmets, showed up with a former Viet Cong called a *chou hoi*, which meant "open arms." Millions of leaflets were dropped over Vietnam inviting the enemy to turn themselves over and, in exchange for divulging where their camps were, they would be given land far away in a safe zone. The First and Third Platoons were on patrol, so the captain ordered the Second Platoon, some engineers with explosives, and the forward observer and me, to follow as he led us behind the Intelligence guys (who spoke Vietnamese of course) and the chou hoi. We were about fifty men altogether. If we rescued Americans from a POW camp, the whole world would know. The mission was noble, the tactics were insane.

After about a quarter of a mile the chou hoi showed us the trail. There was a recently abandoned machine gun nest covering it. They knew we were coming. The chou hoi was probably more scared than I was. As we went deeper into dense jungle, every cell in my body screamed to get the hell out of there, but no words left my lips. The trail was heavily used. We talked quietly among ourselves about how crazy this was, being led deep into "Indian country" by a Viet Cong. We didn't trust him. Why did the officers?

After several uneventful hours, darkness fell and we lay down for the night, stretched out on the trail. Because of the suddenness of our departure, we hadn't been issued any rations. Water was scarce also on the mountainside. My body felt like water though, filled with fear like I'd never known. We joked while grimly searching wide-eyed side to side for an ambush.

With first light we moved on, and immediately a Viet Cong jumped out and sprayed the Intelligence guy on our point with an AK47. Our guy sprayed back and wasn't wounded but had seven bullet holes in his gear and clothing. He wounded the sniper. We followed blood along the trail for hours. We came to an area with lots of empty caves. The officers ordered tear gas thrown into the caves, but it came back out and in the dense jungle, gassed us instead. We moved on, led by the supposedly ex-Viet Cong chou hoi.

The dense jungle was the worst problem. We couldn't pinpoint our position on a map without being able to sight landmarks. If we needed them, we couldn't call artillery because it could land on us, and we had the same problem with directing helicopter gunships or fixed-wing aircraft.

We finished the second day, still with no rations. Just before dark, a marine was sent as far up a tree as he could climb and popped a colored smoke grenade as a signal. A helicopter spotted us and dropped cases of rations out the door. We recovered most of them from the jungle and finally ate. We spent another night stretched out on the trail.

Shortly after starting in the morning, the point was ambushed again. The point man took a bullet in his helmet, but it ricocheted around the inside and out again leaving just a scratch in his scalp. We moved on and came to a huge bomb crater. Before we crossed it, the captain called the forward observer and me to the edge of the crater. The FO was a crackerjack map reader.

As we stood at the edge of the crater shooting compass azimuths to nearby mountains, automatic weapons fired on us from the opposite side. We were a tight packed group carrying 45 caliber pistols, with one exception. Remember Paul Mayer, the future IRS agent? He had his machine gun on the ground beside him and fired back quickly. With no place for cover, I watched dust kicking up at my feet from bullets missing us. It lasted thirty seconds. None of us was scratched. For some reason I didn't wet my pants, but my insides were trembling. The captain was determined to press on.

We finally knew where we were, but it was small comfort. The captain sent the Intelligence guys and the chou hoi along with the machine gun crew over to the other side of the bomb crater. He looked

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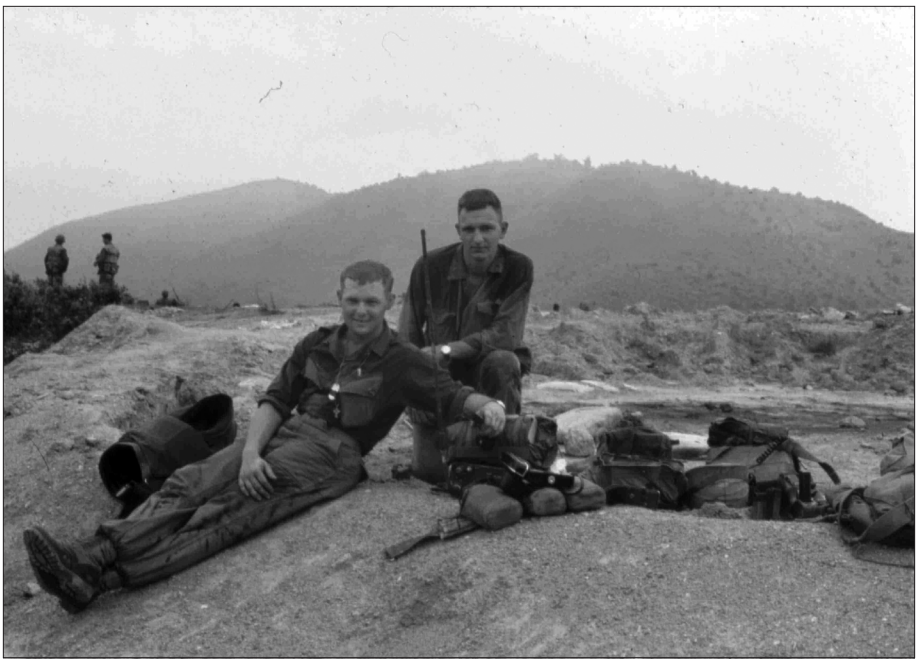
at us. "You guys get on point and call your artillery to soften up the area ahead of us." They always insisted we be closest to the target, under the assumption we would be more accurate.

I always wrote the fire mission first to avoid confusion while transmitting on the radio. I had to sit to write and use my handset. I sat on the side of the trail, and pulled my helmet off to prop up my back. The chou hoi started screaming. "Freeze!" the interpreter yelled pointing at me. I did. Behind me, just beneath my helmet, was a trip wire. The chou hoi spotted the wire, although it was lightly covered with leaves. Of course he would have been killed also. The booby trap was an antitank mine about twelve inches in diameter and five inches thick.

Afterward, I don't know how I kept moving that last day. We called a barrage ahead of us. The choi hoi kept looking at me and pointing to both sides of the trail saying "VC! VC!" The officers ignored him. After a while he pointed down the mountain perpendicular to the trail. The interpreter said the POW camp was in the ravine below us where we could hear a river. The captain ordered us to leave the trail and head straight downhill.

Beside the river was a small settlement. The prison cells were ten-foot-deep holes maybe six feet in diameter with thatched roofs and open sides above the holes. We were probably close to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was used to move prisoners up to North Vietnam. The village was recently abandoned and we found no prisoners. There was still food and ammunition scattered around. The captain ordered everything burned down. Headquarters said to follow the river and get the hell out of there.



Steve Pullen (l) with forward observer, Vietnam, 1967. (Photo courtesy Steve Pullen)

"Lucky Lima" Company, Second Platoon, had made it through three days in deep enemy territory with only one man slightly wounded. Later intelligence reports said that a massive ambush was set for us if we had stayed on the trail. A couple of months later, an article appeared in the Stars and Stripes newspaper mentioning the mission briefly, mostly making a big deal out of the guy with the seven bullet holes. No mention was made of the chou hoi who saved our lives.

In June, I was transferred to another artillery battery that wasn't attached to the infantry. Someone at Headquarters realized I was overqualified as a radio telegraph operator to be working as a field radio operator. So my days with the infantry were over. We were sent to Dong Ha near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ.)

Paul Mayer was wounded three times. The Marines had a policy of reassigning anyone with three purple hearts out of a line company. He spent the rest of his tour with the Military Police.

The 26th Marine Regiment and its artillery batteries were sent to Khe Sanh in the farthest northwest corner of South Vietnam, close to Laos and the DMZ. Lima Company's captain was killed on June 27, 1967. From January to April 1968, Khe Sanh was under siege by the North Vietnamese Army. The base could only be supplied by air. During this siege four hundred Marines were killed.

— Steve Pullen

Other veterans are encouraged to tell us their stories.

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Bobcats in Town

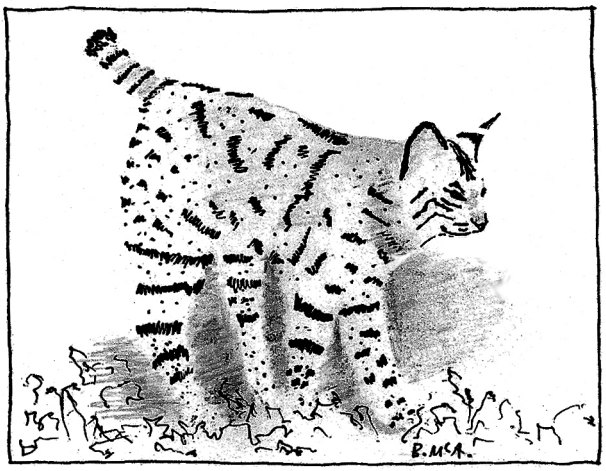
This month's Wildlife Report is remarkable for its bobcats. Though these wild cats are common in these parts, they are mostly nocturnal and keep out of sight. In the winter we can see their tracks, but most folks aren't sure if they are seeing dog tracks, coyote, foxes, or wild cats.

These confusions are understandable. Dogs and cats, whether wild or domestic, have similar feet and make similar tracks. There is a heel pad and then four toes out in front. We know our housecats have five toes on the front feet (unless they are equipped with "double paws," in which case they have various extra toes). But of these five, only four show up in a track, as the fifth is rather like a thumb and is a bit up the leg from the other toes. It is important for snagging a bird from the air and for climbing, but it is not used for walking.

Bobcats have this same arrangement, with a pretty heel pad, two lobes in front and three behind, and four toes arranged out front and to the sides. Overall the track is rounded, more so than that of a dog, and it does not show claw marks as these cats retract their claws except when they need them for snagging, climbing, or fighting.

Tracking in the snow is tricky. Deep snow gives up the details of claws and toes way down at the bottom of the print. A warm or rainy day results in the track "melting out," or expanding in size. It will then freeze at night and may appear quite clear in its morning icy form, but it will be abnormally large.

Both the cats and the wild dogs often show a line of tracks, almost as if they had been up walking on two legs. These are called "register tracks," as the hind feet step right in the tracks the front feet have left. Most domestic dogs are not this tidy.



Not only do they not leave register tracks, they may also drag their toes, leaving a sort of scratch mark between prints. Deer often do this, too, depending upon the depth of the snow. And speaking of deer, it is easy to confuse the tracks of a deer with those of a dog of a certain size. The front two toes of the dog can look very like the leading tips of the two toes of a hoof.

Bobcats are closely related to the Canada lynx, which is not typically found in these parts, only farther north in what is called the "boreal forest." Our bobcats do not like the deep woods so much and range in more open country, along edges and ridges. Their prey are mostly small rodents, ground birds such as ruffed grouse, rabbits, sometimes deer or fawns, and of course chickens if they are handy. You can keep your chickens safe from bobcats by closing them in at night.

Both bobcats and lynxes have tufted ears and short tails. A lynx is about 3 feet long, and a bobcat may get this big, also. At the shoulder, a bobcat will be about 15 inches tall, whereas a lynx may be 24 inches. Generally, bobcats are roughly two or three times the size of a domestic cat and their tracks about 2 inches across.

The short "bobbed" tail on a bobcat has bold black rings showing on its top side only, whereas the tail of a lynx is ringed all the way around. The tip of the lynx tail is completely black, whereas the top of the tip is black on a bobcat, and the bottom of the tip of the tail is snowy white.

These wildcats, as they are sometimes called, hunt by sight rather than by scent. Thy do not track their prey but prowl all around keeping a sharp eye out for any movement. Often a wildcat will sit stock still for long periods of time, watching for a rustle in the grass. Then it will crouch low and stalk, like a powerfully coiled spring, only the tip of its tail twitching. It makes a powerful lightning-fast leap, sometimes ten feet, and if it misses its mark it is unlikely to pursue. It will let it go and wait for another.

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The bobcats have been mating in January and February and will give birth to one to four kittens after 50 days' gestation. At 9 days, the kittens' eyes open and they come out of the den. They'll spend the summer being tutored by both parents in the art of nomadic hunting and by fall will be on their own, and though kittens may stay together that first winter, they do not stay with their parents. The parents may stay paired for the winter, but more likely they will separate and live as solo hunters until February when it is mating time again.

Bobcats are mostly silent, with some hissing and spitting. But during the mating season they sound like their domestic cousins the alley cats, with much squalling and screaming.

There is not much market for the pelt of a bobcat. Though it is handsome, with a lovely spotted belly, the fur itself is somewhat brittle and perishable. The hide, or leather, is said to be sturdy and useful, and those who have eaten the meat say it is sweet and tender. For some reason, most modern hunters have little interest in eating the meat of a cat, though they enjoy deer meat.

Wildcats are fearless hunters. They do not look for trouble and will never attack a person unless they are injured or trapped, and even then they usually just crouch and hiss. But a 20-pound bobcat has been known to leap upon a 200-pound deer and succeed in killing it.

Wildcats have few enemies. Even the parasites they carry around seem not to do them any harm. As usual it is only people who tend to blast away at the large predators, not understanding their important role in the local land community, seeing them rather as an opportunity for sport, or perhaps an age-old challenge to the pioneering (human) way of life. As early as 1727 there was a bounty on the wildcat, giving 30 shillings for the scalp of an adult male.

I recently got a chance to look at a bobcat up close when my partner found one dead on the road and brought it home. If you ever get this fantastic opportunity, I hope you'll remember to notice its remarkable tongue. We know the tongue of the cat is famously rough, sand-papery. In the bobcat, this is carried to an extreme: the back part of the top surface of the tongue sprouts long stiff bristles which curve back toward the opening to the throat. Once a meal starts down that lane, there is no chance it will jump out and run away. Also, this design provides for efficient lapping of water, carrying lots back with each lap.

This is our wild feline neighbor, perfect in every way, able to thrive year 'round in these rocky wooded hills. This is *Lynx rufus*.

— Bonner J. McAllester

Sandisfield to Have Its Own Publication

A group of Sandisfield residents has decided the town needs a vehicle for communication and will launch a monthly newsletter called "The Sandisfield Times" in April. The mission of The Sandisfield Times is to connect the community through reliable, regular, relevant information.

Sandisfield has been without a monthly newsletter for over two years. The editors of The Sandisfield Times intend to cover serious local issues, events, history, and politics as well as literature and lifestyle topics such as gardening and birding. Founding members include author Simon Winchester and his wife, Setsuko, a former producer for NPR, as well as several other full-time residents and second home owners. Local artist and graphic designer Tina Sotis will design the publication.

The Sandisfield Times is an independent, nonprofit organization that will fund publication through sponsorships from regional and local businesses and residents. Speaking on behalf of the Town of Sandisfield, Selectman Patrick Barrett welcomed the news of the launch: "We are sorely in need of a way to find out what's going on in town and hope this publication, along with a new town web site planned for later this year, will really improve communication and bring people together."

For more information, visit www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

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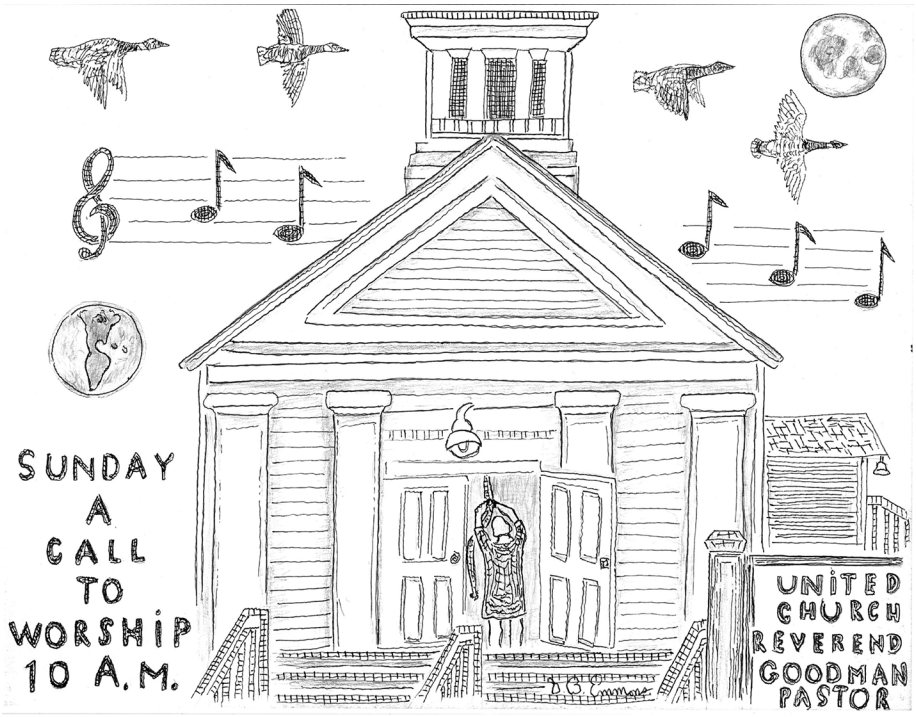
March Music of the Spheres



Before our wondering eyes, March will melt the mask of winter's panacea, until underlying features return the favor of our hopeful gaze, as the planet Earth slowly moves in its orbit to turn the face of the Northern Hemisphere into the warming sun, creating a vision of environmental renewal.

Native Americans in Tyringham noted this celestial observance with the coming of a full "sap" moon, and when early European settlers first arrived, the natives showed them how sap would rise in walnut, hickory, and black cherry trees, and especially in sugar maples. They then poured syrup in the snow creating a kind of sugar candy of a most basic kind,

Further north in what is now New Hampshire, the Abenakis built a more functional observance of the change of the season in at least one location, a crude stone chamber whose entry registered the equinox in equal amounts of light and shadow, just as other ancient religions around the world had constructed Stonehenge, Machu Picchu, and Easter Island as lasting monuments to planetary motion in time and space.

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras was the first to speak of the "Music of the Spheres," for him a mystical geometrical measurement of equal cosmic components interacting together in perfect harmony. If the sound was not audible, the inspirational cause and effect down on Earth is believed to have directly or indirectly inspired the genius of great composers such as Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart, to name a few.

Here in Monterey, the chilled stillness of the pale blue sky of early spring may well be broken by the clarion of migrating Canada or snow geese, perhaps as inspirational as the "Hallelujah Chorus" of Handel's immortal *Messiah*. If religious powers seem to come from above, there may be meaning in the late physicist Geoffrey Burbridge's findings that the simplest elements of oxygen, iron, carbon, and others that make up the human body are also found in stardust.

The origin of the name Sunday comes from the solar star that is the center of our solar system. So on that day, when the bell in the Monterey Church tower chimes at 10 a.m., it might be a call from the heavens to open up a hymnal and add a high note of the Music of the Spheres to celebrate observance of the religious holidays of spring.

— George B. Emmons

ॐ

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Book Review

The Israel Test, by George Gilder
(2009, Richard Vigilante Books, $27.95)

In *The Israel Test*, Tyringham resident George Gilder claims that the moral crisis that confronts the world today is not the global depression or the political oppression under which so many people are forced to live. Rather, it comes in having to choose between embracing those who have achieved prosperity or envying and trying to tear them down. This is what Gilder calls the Israel test.

It is a rather uncontroversial starting point. Most of us would agree that we all ought to admire and encourage excellence wherever we see it. However, Gilder—hardheaded realist that he is—is quick to point out that the peoples of the world "vary tremendously in their talents and capabilities, and moral integrity...." Since this is a book about Israel, much of its polemical thrust is taken up with a fleshing-out of the moral and genetic variances between the two groups of people Gilder is most concerned with: Jews and Arabs. It is an argument that can shock the reader with its racism.

The Palestinians form "a ghetto of violent male groups and welfare queens," demonstrate an "animus for land and blood," and together constitute a "primitive people" capable only of producing "primitive handicrafts." The Jews, on the other hand, enjoy "superiority and excellence" in cultural, intellectual, and economic affairs. Gilder's run through the history of the twentieth century in science and technology is meant to seduce the reader into believing this racialist drivel about the Jews' "manifest supremacy over all other ethnic groups."

Only after we properly understand their racial inferiority, Gilder tells us, can we see how Palestinian resentments are caused by envy of "the Jewish genius." (If only the Palestinians could realize how wonderful it is to be "overwhelmingly the largest beneficiaries of Israel"!) Likewise, academic and legal critics fail the Israel test when they denounce Israeli policies said to harm Palestinians. The author cannot resist sliming these critics of Israel—many of them Jews—as anti-Semites and even Nazis.

As the Nazi allusions shamelessly peppered throughout the book make clear, Gilder will pull no punches in trying to win his argument. But to succeed in doing so, he has to avoid the mountain of evidence of enormous suffering inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian people. Like last year's Israeli incursion into Gaza, a bloodbath to which he commits just a few short paragraphs. Or the wanton destruction of Palestinian homes and olive groves. Or the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) often brutal repression of nonviolent demonstrators who resist such injustices. (On a side note, one of many protesters cut down by the IDF was the American peace activist Rachel Corrie. Corrie worked for a time in the same Washington state elementary school as *Monterey News* contributor, Jeramy Vallianos. In an email, Jeramy said he remembered her as being a "kind and gentle soul." She was crushed by an IDF bulldozer in 2003; no one has ever been held to account for her death.)

It turns out Gilder may have a financial stake in steering our attention away from the matter of Israeli atrocities. In an interview last fall that aired on CSTB-TV's "Spirit of the Berkshires" program, Gilder talked about his investment in Israeli firms like EZChip. Over the past few years he has made a name for himself promoting EZChip, and by his own admission this notoriety has helped the book enjoy brisk sales in Israel.

But if Gilder the blue-chip investor wanted to burnish Israel's reputation with this book, he did a terrible job doing it. To assert that the Palestinians are a primitive people who must submit to the whim of a Jewish master race is colonialist claptrap, nothing more. Unfortunately, Gilder's book—printed by a small press specializing in conservative publications—was not widely reviewed in the U.S. Unfortunate, for it is this reviewer's opinion that broader publicity given to the book's crass racism would have resulted in Gilder getting laughed out of the public arena once and for all.

— Seth Kershner

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Learning to Love Compost

Last month we looked at the components of a healthy soil up close, with its vast community of organisms, minerals, water, and air. This time we're going to talk about how to get our own garden soils up to healthy soil levels. In other words, how do we get there from here?

How can we know what is actually in our soil at present? Throwing soil amendments in there, even organic ones, can't really tell us if we are helping or hurting the process. That's why we get a soil test. There are of course many soil testing labs in the country, and we have a good one right here at UMass Amherst. The process is fairly simple and inexpensive and everything you need to know is on their website, http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/.

Let's imagine we have the soil test results. It will show us, among other things, the pH level and the amount of individual elements present in the soil sample. If we indicated that we wanted to grow vegetables, for example, there would also be recommendations on what elements should be added to the soil to make an ideal growing environment. The test will also tell us if certain elements are too highly concentrated in our soil so that we can avoid overdoing it in the future.

Where would you start if you wanted to improve the soil? Planting cover crops? Letting it lie fallow? Sowing mineral accumulator plants? Adding compost, or other soil amendments? These methods are all good and can be used at different times depending on how you want to use the land.

We'll start with compost. The benefits of adding compost to your soil cannot be overstated. Compost improves the microbial life of the soil, improves its structure and increases soil's water and nutrient retention. Compost adds humus; humus is a chapter all by itself, but let's just say that it is the fairly stable end-product of fully decomposed compost. Humus itself decomposes over such a long period that its presence stabilizes soil fertility with its slow release of nutrients to the soil.

When we make compost, we mix plant and animal wastes together with sufficient oxygen and water for our soil microbial friends to come out in force and rapidly decompose the living wastes. If the mixture is right the process is sufficiently fast to generate heat, which will kill off any plant pests and pathogens in the compost as well as weed seeds. Fast compost can reach temperatures of 140–150 degrees in 3–4 days. Anything over that temperature is not good because it will also kill beneficial organisms. You will need to turn over the whole compost pile and remix it after the pile starts to cool so that all the compostable materials get exposed to oxygen and heat. Compost can be finished in as little as 40 days, but I've never gotten even close! Like most of us I usually have what are called cold compost piles. Most of the same processes occur in cold compost, only more slowly. Remember that you cannot expect pathogens and weed seeds to be killed in a cold compost pile. For this reason it is best to keep diseased plants and weeds with seeds out of your pile in the first place unless you are very experienced with hot compost production.

There must be a small mountain of books describing methods for making compost, and you can tackle them depending on the amount of time and energy you have to give it. The basic rule is that you want a carbon to nitrogen ratio of 20 to 30 parts carbon to one part nitrogen. Since most compostable materials contain both, we generally add three times as much carbon-containing material as nitrogen. High-carbon materials include dead crop residues, brown leaves, and allowable paper sources (no colored inks). High nitrogen materials include manures, green grass clippings and other live plant

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waste, fish wastes, and some seed meals like alfalfa and soybean.

You can spend a small fortune on composters, but compost can just as easily be made in a variety of homemade devices. Your composter could be a hand-cranked bin for mixing small batches or a series of bins that make it easier to turn over the material during the composting process. My bins were made by lashing wooden pallets together. Just make sure your bins allow enough air to penetrate into the compost pile, since what we want is aerobic decomposition.

One goal of organic land care, by the way, is to achieve a closed system—meaning that all inputs, like compost, come from the same property. It's not an easy thing to do but you can get pretty close over time. Making compost on your own property is one of the most important things you can do to keep materials out of the waste stream and lower the carbon footprint of your own food.

I confess I'm going to gloss over compost teas here a bit, because making compost teas requires fairly expensive inputs, including equipment. Also it tends to be used as a foliar spray to feed and inoculate plants, and we're talking about soil structure here. Even so, compost tea can add microbes to the soil and enhance the soil food web. There are many guides available if you want to pursue this method.

Compost is the primary soil amendment, and with good reason, but there are times when other soil amendments are required. The manures from herbivores can be directly applied to the soil as well as added to compost piles. Manures can aid soil fertility because they consist of partially decomposed plant materials. Since they are partially decomposed, the manures contain material that is readily available to our soil microbe friends to feed on. Manures can also contain pathogens that can contaminate our crops so, to be safe, manure should be applied to soil no less than 120 days prior to harvest. It also should be thoroughly incorporated into the soil to avoid runoff into water sources. You'll hear various recommendations about which animal manures to use—just be sure not to use manure from cats and dogs, as they can contain pathogens harmful to humans that persist in the soil. The same goes for pigs, because their manure can easily contain e-coli as well as harmful heavy metals.

Next month we'll look at the Big Three macronutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which are required in comparatively large quantities for healthy plant production. We'll also review the micronutrients that are needed by many plants and how to get them into the soil.

— Ruth Green

Time to Sign Up for the Community Garden

On Saturday, February 27, a group of interested Monterey residents met to discuss this year's plans for the new community garden. We'll be hosting an organic gardening skills workshop in collaboration with the Northeast Organic Farming Association on April 10, beginning at 9:00 a.m. We will start with a presentation on organic garden practices and then, weather permitting, head out to the garden. Look for more details in the April issue of the *Monterey News*.

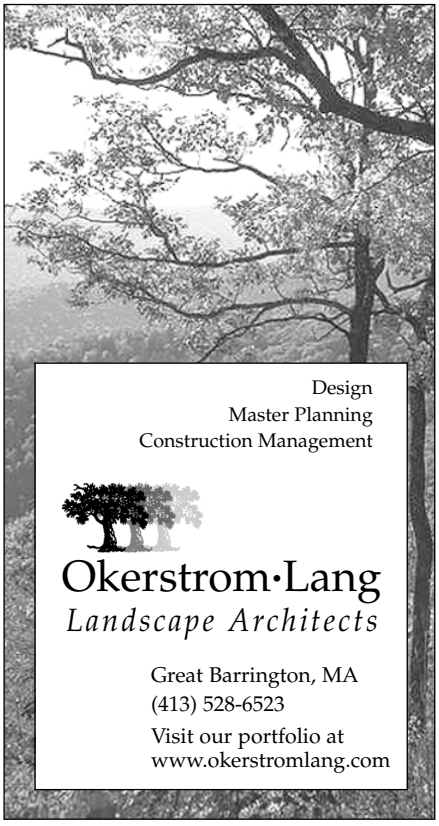
If you plan to attend the April Community Dinner, members of our committee will be there to bring everyone up to date on the garden and answer any questions.

At the end of the meeting we watched a video made by the Sunshine Community Garden in Austin, Texas, in which the gardeners talked about what community gardening meant for them. With all the snow on the ground here in Monterey, we enjoyed looking at their green garden plots as much as listening to the gardeners!

We are now accepting registration forms for the garden. If you would like to sign up, you can find a registration form on our website: www.ccmonterey.org .

You are welcome to sign up for a plot individually or as a group. If you have any questions about registering or about the garden in general, please send us an email at center@ccmonterey.org.

— Ruth Green



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Remembering Michael Feltser

Michael Feltser, 77, passed away January 29, 2010, at Fairview Hospital after a heroic battle with Parkinson's disease. He had lived in Monterey since 1975.

Born in 1932 in London, England, son of Harry and Lillian Goldstein, he studied fashion design and stage set design in London until he came to the United States in 1957. He became a U.S. citizen in 1967.

Michael enjoyed a 45-year career in the fashion industry in New York. From 1968 to 1978, he was employed as Quality Control Manager for men and women's fashions for Montgomery Ward. In 1978, he became Corporate Managing Technical Designer and Quality Control for women's clothing with JC Penney Co. When the Penney Corporation moved to Texas in 1988, Michael developed a consulting practice and did quality control and design work for companies such as Orvis, J. Jill Company, Chadwicks of Boston, Bradlees, Haband, the Girl Scouts of America, and many more. He was Chairman of the American Society of Testing Methods (ASTM) from 1986 to 1990, Chairman of the Mail Order Association of America (MOAA) from 1984 to 1986, and member of the National Bureau of Standards, Technical Committee from 1970 to 1988. He retired in 2000.

Michael had a zest for life and shared his enthusiasm with his family, friends, and acquaintances. He was an avid car enthusiast and had a racing career at Lime Rock Park and other venues in the Northeast. He was president of the Long Island Sports Car Association (LISCA) from 1963 to 1975 and was Chairman of the Eastern Motor Racing Association (EMRA) in 1975. He had been a member of the Madison Avenue Sports Car Driving and Chowder Society since 1995.

Michael was known in the area as a stylistic singer, and he performed in area shows, local clubs, and also among friends. He also enjoyed skeet shooting and played croquet as a member of the Lenox Croquet Club. He was a member of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and conducted the Headlines Class for several years.

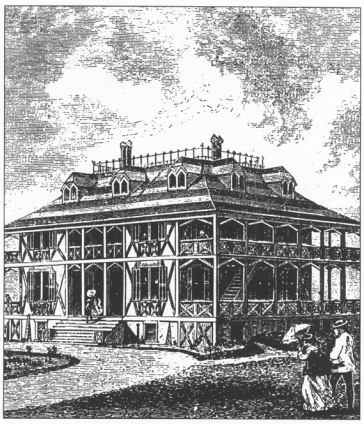
He leaves his wife of 24 years, Sharon, of Monterey; his son, Nicholas Feltser, of Seattle, Wash.; stepson, Matthew Sherb, and wife, Misty, of Sydney, Australia; stepdaughter, Shelley Lawrence, of Oak Hill, Va.; stepdaughter, Gabrielle Evers and husband, Jeffrey, of Wayne, Pa.; and seven grandchildren. He also leaves his dearest friend and cousin, Irving Goldstein, and his wife, Marilyn, of London, England.

A memorial service celebrating the life of Michael Feltser will be held at a future date.

ॐ

Remembering Lillian Oislander

Lillian Oislander, 92, formerly of Lake Worth, Florida, and Monterey, died Monday, February 8, peacefully at her daughter Meredith's' home in West Islip, NY. Lillian and her husband, Dr. William B. Oislander, came to Monterey in 1967, where they owned and operated Lakeside Terrace Bed and Breakfast on Lake Garfield. They spent many happy summers in Monterey, and after Bill's passing in 2001 Lillian continued on at "The Terrace" for many more summers. Lillian is survived by her two beloved daughters, Meredith Oislander and Marjorie Krause, and her loving granddaughters, Allison and Lindsay Krause. Funeral services were held in Lindenhurst New York on February 9. Rest well, Lillian, Monterey will miss you but your memory will live on.



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Calendar

Every Monday: Select Board meeting, 4 p.m., Town Hall.

Every Saturday in winter: Youth ice hockey at Monterey rink, 8–10 a.m.

Wednesday, March 3: CHP Health Education Session, 4:30–6:30 p.m., Fairview Hospital.

Thursdays, March 4, 11, 18, 25: U.S. Census Testing 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Town Hall Meeting Room. Information 528-1443.

Saturday, March 6:

Rabies Shot Clinic for dogs and cats, Monterey Fire Station, 1–2:30 p.m.

Meeting on proposed Monterey Dog Park, 11 a.m., Meetinghouse basement. See p. 6.

CHP-WIC Baby Fair, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. CHP Family Services Building, 442 Stockbridge Road (Route 7 North), Great Barrington.

Tuesday, March 9: Democratic Party Caucus, 5 p.m., Meetinghouse basement. See p. 6.

Thursday, March 11: Free Blood Pressure Clinic, Town Hall Meeting Room, 2–3 p.m.

Friday, March 12: *Black Gold*, free movie, 7 p.m., Meetinghouse basement. See p. 9.

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We thank the following folks for their recent contributions. Your support makes it possible for us to continue publishing in these hard times.

The Klingenstein Fund
Joan & Arthur Wing
Steve Moore & Wendy Jensen

Saturday, March 13: Gould Farm benefit performance by Frank La Franzia, 7:30 p.m., Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington. See p. 9.

Tuesday, March 16: CHP Free Health Screening, 10 a.m.–noon, Town Hall Meeting Room.

Wednesday, March 17: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m., Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. Musical presentation by Gabriella Makuc on piano and Hannah Cohen on violin. See p. 8.

Friday, March 26: First meeting of Youth Writing Group, 7 p.m., Monterey Meetinghouse basement. See p. 6.

Saturday, March 27: Square and contra dancing, 8:30–11:30 p.m., Dewey Hall, Rt. 7, Sheffield. Music by Mountain Laurel. Caller Joe Baker. All dances are taught; beginners and children are welcome. Adults $8–10, children $5. Information 528-9385.

Monday, March 29: Adult Book Discussion Group, 7:30 p.m., Monterey Library. See p. 11.

The Observer
January 26–February 25

High temp. (2/23)	42°
Low temp. (1/30, 31)	-6°
Avg. high temp.	29.6°
Avg. low temp.	16.2°
Avg. temp.	22.9°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	5.21 in.
Snowfall	37.2 in.

Precipitation occurred on 24 days.

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. Our editorial address is P. O. Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may also be left in the drop box on the loading dock of the General Store. Address requests for advertising rates and further information to the Editor, or telephone us at 413-528-4347 or e-mail montereynews9@gmail.com.

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Editor..... Will Marsh
Asst. Editor ..... Glynis Marsh
Reporter.....Sue Protheroe
Mailing Labels ..... Joe Baker
Treasurer ..... Mari Enoch

Contributions from local artists this month: Maureen Banner, p. 23, George Emmons, p. 18; Bonner McAllester, p. 16.

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